

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claims 1, 4, 8 to 10, 12, 14, 18, 20 and 22 as shown in the attached Appendix. The claims, as pending in the subject application, read as follows:

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1. (Twice Amended) An image input apparatus comprising:
conversion means for converting an image signal into digital information;
reading means for reading an encryption key from an external source;
first storage means for storing said encryption key read by the reading means;
second storage means for storing said encryption key to execute an encryption process;
encryption means for encrypting the digital information by using said encryption key stored in the second storage means; and
erasing means for erasing said encryption key from said first and second storage means coincident with completion of the digital information being encrypted by the encryption means.

2. (Not Changed From Prior Version) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encryption means encrypts the digital information which has undergone a high-efficiency coding operation.

3. (Not Changed From Prior Version) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising image pick-up means for optically picking up an image of a subject and for generating an image signal from the picked-up image.

4. (Amended) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising means for inputting said encryption key from the external source.

5. (Not Changed From Prior Version) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising means for generating said encryption key within said image input apparatus.

6. (Not Changed From Prior Version) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a common key cryptosystem.

7. (Not Changed From Prior Version) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a public key cryptosystem.

8. (Amended) An image input apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising means for inputting from the external source another encryption key for encrypting said encryption key.

9. (Amended) An image input apparatus according to claim 8, wherein said encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a common key cryptosystem, and said another encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a public key cryptosystem.

10. (Twice Amended) An image input method comprising the steps of:
converting an image signal into digital information;
reading an encryption key from an external source;
a first storage step of storing said encryption key in a first storage means;
a second storage step of storing said encryption key in a second storage means to execute an encryption process;
encrypting the digital information by using said encryption key stored in said second storage means; and
erasing said encryption key from said first and second storage means coincident with completion of the digital information being encrypted in the encrypting step.

11. (Not Changed From Prior Version) An image input method according to claim 10, wherein the digital information which has undergone a high-efficiency coding operation is encrypted.

12. (Amended) An image input method according to claim 10, wherein the image signal is generated from an optically picked up image of a subject which is converted into the digital information.

13. (Not Changed From Prior Version) An image input method according to claim 10, wherein said encryption key comprises an encryption key based on one of a common key cryptosystem and a public key cryptosystem.

14. (Twice Amended) An encryption processing program stored in a computer-readable medium, comprising:

a step of converting an image signal into digital information;

a step of reading an encryption key from an external source;

a first storage step of storing said encryption key in a first storage means;

a second storage step of storing said encryption key in a second storage means to execute an encryption process;

a step of encrypting the digital information by using said encryption key stored in said second storage means; and

a step of erasing said encryption key from said first and said second storage means coincident with completion of the digital information being encrypted in the encrypting step.

18. (Twice Amended) An image input apparatus comprising:

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conversion means for converting an image signal into digital information;
information encryption means for encrypting the digital information by
using an internal encryption key stored within said image input apparatus;
means for inputting from an external source an external encryption key for
encrypting said internal encryption key;
key encryption means for encrypting said internal encryption key by using
said external encryption key and storing said external encryption key in a plurality of
storage means; and
erasing means for erasing both the internal encryption key stored in the
image input apparatus and the external encryption key stored in said plurality of storage
means coincident with completion of encrypting the internal encryption key by the key
encryption means.

19. (Not Changed From Prior Version) An image input apparatus according
to claim 18, wherein said internal encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a
common key cryptosystem, and said external encryption key comprises an encryption key
based on a public key cryptosystem.

20. (Twice Amended) An image input method for an image input apparatus
comprising the steps of:

converting an image signal into digital information;

encrypting the digital information by using an internal encryption key stored within said image input apparatus;

obtaining from an external source an external encryption key for encrypting said internal encryption key;

encrypting said internal encryption key by using said external encryption key and storing said external encryption key in a plurality of storage means; and

erasing both the internal encryption key stored in the image input apparatus and the external encryption key stored in said plurality of storage means coincident with completion of the step of encrypting the internal encryption key using the external encryption key.

22. (Twice Amended) An encryption processing program stored in a computer-readable medium, comprising:

a step of converting an image signal into digital information;

a step of encrypting the digital information by using an internal encryption key stored within an image input apparatus;

a step of obtaining from an external source an external encryption key for encrypting said internal encryption key;

a step of encrypting said internal encryption key by using said external encryption key and storing said external encryption key in a plurality of storage means; and